



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

GUEST EDITORIAL

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CONTACT: Patrick Gasper, Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

Go forward with courage

By State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster

In schools across Wisconsin, young people, their parents and families, teachers, and neighbors are gathering to recognize our students' accomplishments. Whether it is a music program, art exhibit, science fair, awards ceremony, or graduation, these are proud moments worth remembering.

They are moments, too, that define tomorrow and the future. Students who do well in their academic studies, who compete on the athletic field, or succeed in science or the arts, develop skills that will last a lifetime. Knowing how to learn, what it takes to be part of a team, and understanding how to apply knowledge to new situations are skills for future study, future work, and for life.

Our 2008 graduating seniors face challenges that are greater and more complex than any previous generation. The old demons of hunger, poverty, and despair have new companions: terrorism, climate change, and diminishing natural resources. It will take great minds, phenomenal talent, and unflagging perseverance to resolve these world issues.

Most of our high school graduates will go on to further education. A smaller percentage will immediately join the workforce or military service. Regardless of their plans, they are joining an international community that demands that they cooperate and collaborate with their neighbors next door and as part of our increasingly interconnected world. They will need to make a difference, and many already have.

Young people in our FFA student organization sent more than 5,000 pairs of shoes to Iraq in a show of compassion and diplomatic outreach that touches our hearts and the lives of those an ocean away. Thousands of our students are reaching out at home through service-learning, the educational tool that connects academic work with service to the community. Volunteer service is a part of many students' resumes.

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We've prepared our graduates well for their next steps in life. Wisconsin has premier educational programs that expose students to other languages, cultures, and ideas as well as teach them to think critically and to solve problems. Our state students score well on college admissions tests and other indicators of educational accomplishment.

Yet just as our 2008 graduates face challenges, Wisconsin has more to do so that educational success reaches every student. Our New Wisconsin Promise ensures a quality education for every child. Our schools, teachers, parents, and communities must hold the belief that *every* child will graduate with the training and skills they need to be successful citizens. It isn't just the financial commitment we make to public education. Each family must value education as an opportunity. Every community must invest in its schools to keep them an integral and well-functioning part of the neighborhood. And, business and industry must partner with schools to produce the educated citizens and workforce we need for the future.

With this commitment to education as the foundation of our democracy, tomorrow's graduates will be even more ready; they'll have the education and preparation they need to go forward with courage.

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Elizabeth Burmaster is the elected state superintendent of public instruction.

NOTES: A high-resolution photo of the state superintendent is available on the Department of Public Instruction "Media Contacts and Resources" webpage at <http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/vm-media.html>. This editorial is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_86.pdf.